

**REMARKS**

Reconsideration and allowance of the subject patent application are respectfully requested.

Amendments of a formal nature have been made to the specification.

Claims 3 and 7 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. Section 102(b) as allegedly being “anticipated” by Sakai et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,329,122). Claims 4 and 8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. Section 103(a) as allegedly being “obvious” over Sakai et al. While not acquiescing in these rejections or in the characterizations of Sakai et al. in the office action, claims 3 and 7 have been amended. The discussion below makes reference to the amended claims.

Sakai et al. discloses an information processing apparatus for effecting the recording or reproducing of information and which includes a probe electrode, a cantilever piezo-electric member, a controller and a detector. With reference to Figures 24 and 25, Sakai et al. describes that a probe electrode 2106 is formed on the upper surface of each cantilever 2107. Wiring 2130 from the probe electrode 2106 to the charge accumulating electrostatic capacitance 2104 is surrounded by a guard-ring-like wiring 2131 connected to a dummy electrostatic capacitance 2103.

The arrangement of Sakai et al. is quite different than that required by claims 3 and 7.

Claims 3 and 7, for example, each requires a first electrode that extends through an opening formed in a supporting member from a second surface to a first surface thereof, and further extends to a tip portion of a projection portion through an opening centrally formed in the projection portion. No such opening in a supporting member or in a projection portion is shown by Sakai et al., much less an electrode that extends through such an opening. Sakai et al. also fails to disclose or suggest an electric conductor portion as claimed, i.e., a conductor disposed on a second surface of the support member that provides an electric connection to the first electrode.

As described in the subject patent application by way of example without limitation, an electric field can be applied by the first electrode at the tip portion of the projection portion (which projects toward the dielectric material from a first surface of the support member) and an electrical connection to the first electrode can be accomplished on a second surface of the support member. A return electrode on the first-surface-side can return an electric field from the dielectric material. This arrangement can improve, among other things, the tracing capability of the probe. See, e.g., page 4, lines 16-17.

New claims 16-23 have been added.


Claim 16 is for a recording/reproducing head and is based on, but not limited to, Figure 2A and Figure 2B and the accompanying description, for example. The claimed arrangement of first and second electrodes is not disclosed or suggested by Sakai et al. Consequently, claim 16 and its dependent claims 17-19 patentably distinguish over Sakai et al.

Claim 20 is for a recording/reproducing head and is based on, but not limited to, Figure 4A and Figure 4B and the accompanying description, for example. The claimed arrangement of first and second electrodes is not disclosed or suggested by Sakai et al. Consequently, claim 20 and its dependent claims 21-23 patentably distinguish over Sakai et al.

The pending claims are believed to be allowable and favorable office action is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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